

Connecting Humanity Through Technology

The Importance of Offering Language
Services as an Organization



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A Telanguage Whitepaper



¡HOLA!

Language and communication are arguably what makes us most human. And yet, with today's technology, we seem to be drifting further away from the art of conversation. To make matters even more complicated, we live in an ever more globalized and diverse world – which can make communicating across cultures nearly impossible. That's where language service solution providers step in. Language service providers are able to bridge the gap across languages and dialects by harnessing the power of technology – specifically through telephonic interpretation.

Roughly 80% of Americans speak English fluently enough to independently navigate their surroundings, therefore many of us have never even considered the need for interpretation services. But imagine if the circumstances were reversed. Imagine living in a country or region where you did not speak the native language. Now imagine you need urgent medical care, vital legal advice, or social service support.

THE ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE SERVICE PROVIDER

Language service providers know first-hand how sensitive, confidential and important their services are. The exchange of information across cultures can be complicated and messy – which are very human traits - but through proprietary technological platforms, these conversations can be harnessed, streamlined and quantified.

The language service provider is an expert in the field. They know the difference between translation and interpretation. They understand that professional interpreters are more accurate and specially trained than a patient's family member. Interpreters are rigorously tested, constantly monitored, and are often full time professionals that receive gratifying fulfillment from supporting their community.

HOW IT WORKS

Telephonic interpretation, or over-the-phone (OPI) interpretation services for limited-English proficient individuals are typically available 24x7x365 with comprehensive support. Most customers are greeted immediately, and average connect times to an interpreter can be as low as 3-4 seconds. The way the system works, there is very rarely any hold time on a clients' end. While agents - or an automated system (client-preference) - are collecting the required information (i.e. access code, department code - if applicable, language needed, etc.), agents are already dialing in the background to connect to an interpreter. Typically, by the time an agent has collected the necessary information the clients are directly connected to an interpreter with essentially zero hold time.

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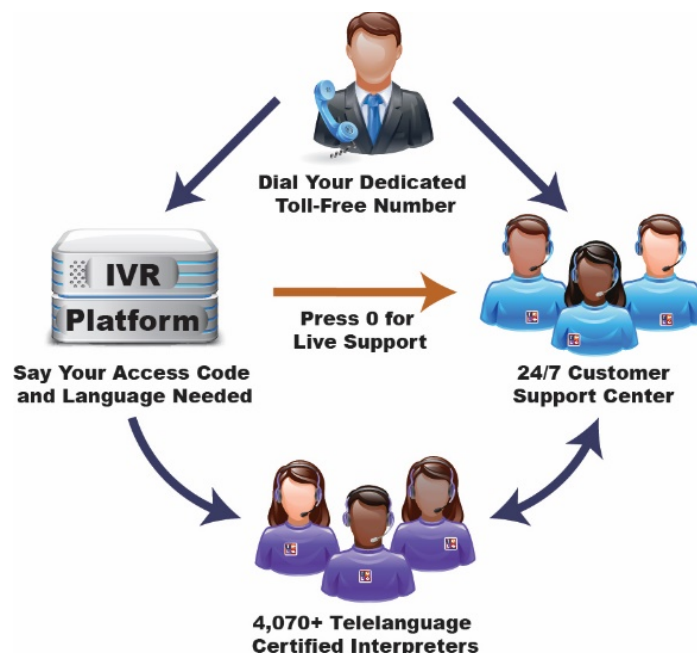
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In the event a client may need to place the call on hold to collect more information, find another party, or step away from the phone for an extended period, it is recommended to hang up and call back to avoid excess billing. Most language service providers are able to reconnect to the same interpreter to keep consistency in the conversation, and avoid costly hold times.

As a language service provider, the goal is to seamlessly integrate into client's processes and infrastructure. In this way, a hospital's patients (for example) may be interacting with a contracted interpreter and never realize that they are not speaking with a hospital employee.

Some large language service providers have inbound, automatic call distribution capabilities which allow them to deliver customers to the appropriate interpreter or other resource on first engagement, segment customers and enable appropriate service prioritization, or deploy interpreters cost-effectively. Meanwhile they are managing both session initiation protocol (SIP)-based, voice over IP (VoIP) agents/interpreters and PSTN-based agents/interpreters from a single, all-in-one contact center platform.

The process is typically very simple. First, the agency, department, hospital, university, business, utility, etc., would need to establish a contract with an experienced language service provider. Then, if a Limited-English speaking individual needed assistance from said organization, the organization would call the language service provider with some basic information: what language is needed, where they are calling from, etc. The organization would then be connected – through an agent or automated answering service – to the correct interpreter, and the conversation could commence.



WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT

In the United States, Spanish is traditionally the most prevalent language needed, but that can vary from region to region. For example, in Harris County, Texas over 85% of all language service requests are for Spanish with Vietnamese coming in second at 10%. In Franklin County, Ohio, just 43% of language service requests are for Spanish and 40% are for Somali. In the greater Detroit area, 26% of requests are Spanish, 22% are Mandarin, and 16% are Arabic.

Each language also includes dialects, cultures and expectations. Language service providers are required to understand and anticipate these challenges to make the interpretation experience as professional and accurate as possible. Technology allows for greater precision, control and compliance. Using unqualified interpreters can cause errors, which could lead to harm, liability and negligence. Through customizable, online platforms, clients can select interpreters that are only local, or only remote. There are benefits to both scenarios.

- Oftentimes, clients prefer interpreters to be local. This creates a sense of familiarity with dialects, as well as regional and local knowledge which could be imperative to navigation. For example, a 911 call could be placed and if the interpreter is not familiar with local pronunciations the ambulance could be routed away from the desired location.
- On the other hand, some languages may prefer less familiarity. For example, the Hmong community is traditionally very conservative and small. In the event a Hmong individual required medical care, they may request a Hmong interpreter outside of their region that would not possibly recognize them. As a language service provider, understanding these intricacies is vital.

LEAVE IT TO THE EXPERTS

Language service providers interpret vital conversations that may relate to urgent healthcare needs, detailed financial information, complex government applications, and much more. We strongly urge interested organizations to research language service solutions to better serve their customers. Many language services providers, Telelanguage included, welcome the opportunity to provide free trials to become familiar with the services, technology and procedures. Telephonic interpretation services can often begin in as little as one day, as no exterior equipment, software or hardware is needed. Overall, the technology may seem complicated, but the result is a function as old as humanity: basic human communication.

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